



NSABB FAQ

1. What is the NSABB? What is the role of the NSABB?

The National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB) is a Federal advisory committee chartered to provide advice, guidance, and leadership regarding biosecurity oversight of dual use research to all Federal departments and agencies with an interest in life sciences research. The NSABB advises on and recommends strategies for the efficient and effective oversight of federally conducted or supported dual use biological research and related issues, taking into consideration national security concerns and the needs of the research community.

[Back to Top](#)

2. How long will the NSABB exist?

As with all Federal advisory committees, the NSABB is chartered for two-year intervals and will continue its work pending biennial renewals of the charter by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

[Back to Top](#)

3. What are the current tasks of the NSABB?

Please click [here](#) for information on current and recent NSABB tasks.

[Back to Top](#)

4. Who serves on the NSABB? How long do members serve?

The NSABB has up to 25 voting members who serve for terms of up to four years. The NSABB members provide expertise in areas such as molecular biology, microbiology, clinical infectious diseases, laboratory biosafety and biosecurity, public health/epidemiology, health physics, pharmaceutical production, veterinary medicine, plant health, food production, bioethics, national security, biodefense, intelligence, national security, law and law enforcement, recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid research, and export control.

NSABB FAQ

NSABB members may come from various stakeholder communities, including academia, medical and scientific journal publishing, industry, institutional biosafety committees, and the general public. In addition, the NSABB includes non-voting ex officio members from 15 federal agencies and departments. The NSABB roster can be found [here](#).

[Back to Top](#)

5. How are NSABB members selected?

The NSABB members are appointed by the Secretary of HHS in consultation with other Federal departments and agencies with an interest in life sciences research. Members of the public can submit nominations for future NSABB membership through the ex officio agencies or directly to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Office of Science Policy (OSP).

[Back to Top](#)

6. What Federal agencies are represented on the NSABB?

The Board includes nonvoting ex officio members from relevant Federal departments and agencies that have an interest in life sciences research. These include:

- Executive Office of the President
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Energy
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Department of Defense
- Department of the Interior
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Agriculture
- National Science Foundation
- Department of Justice
- Department of State
- Department of Commerce
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration

NSABB FAQ

- Intelligence Community
- Others as appropriate

[Back to Top](#)

7. How often does the NSABB meet? Are the meetings open to the public?

The NSABB meets approximately two times within a fiscal year, and may also be convened on an as-needed basis. All meetings of the NSABB are announced in the Federal Register and on the NSABB web site . NSABB meetings are open to the public, except as determined otherwise by the Secretary of HHS, in accordance with the Sunshine Act (5 U.S.C. 552b(c)) and the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

[Back to Top](#)

8. How has the NSABB contributed to advising the United States Government on biosecurity concerns related to dual use research?

The NSABB has submitted a series of reports advising the USG on issues related to dual use research including:

- Criteria for identifying dual use research and guidance for the responsible oversight, conduct and communication of dual use research
- Biosecurity concerns related to the synthesis of select agents
- A strategic plan for outreach and education on dual use research issues
- Strategies for enhancing personnel reliability among individuals with access to select agents
- Biosecurity concerns related to synthetic biology
- Recommendations for the evaluation and oversight of proposed gain-of-function research

Please visit the [NSABB page](#) for NSABB reports on these and other issues. In addition, the NSABB has hosted a series of international meetings on dual use research, with the aim of raising awareness of the dual use research issues, and to facilitate international engagement and information sharing on strategies for managing risk(s) posed by dual use life science research.

NSABB FAQ

[Back to Top](#)

9. Who manages and staffs the NSABB?

The HHS Secretary designated the NIH to provide management and support services for the NSABB. The NSABB staff is located in the Office of Science Policy in the Office of the Director, NIH. You may contact NSABB staff through the NIH OSP at 301-496-9838 or by email at nsabb@od.nih.gov.

[Back to Top](#)

10. What is “dual use research” and “dual use research of concern”?

Life sciences research is vital to improving public health, agriculture, and the environment, and to strengthening our national security and economy. Yet the very research designed to better the health, welfare, and safety of mankind can also yield information or technologies that could potentially be misused for harmful purposes. Research yielding new technologies or information with the potential for both benevolent and malevolent applications is referred to as “dual use research.”

Some degree of dual use potential may be inherent in a significant fraction of life sciences research. However, the small subset of life sciences research with the highest potential for yielding knowledge, products, or technology that could be misapplied to threaten public health or national security is referred to as “dual use research of concern.”

The U.S. Government (USG) defines dual use research of concern as life sciences research that, based on current understanding, can be reasonably anticipated to provide knowledge, information, products, or technologies that could be directly misapplied to pose a significant threat with broad potential consequences to public health and safety, agricultural crops and other plants, animals, the environment, materiel, or national security.

[Back to Top](#)

11. What is the United States Government’s response to the NSABB’s

NSABB FAQ

recommendations?

When the USG receives recommendations from the NSABB, it convenes relevant Federal agencies to analyze the findings and recommendations and to identify options for considering the recommendations. Once options for addressing the recommendations are identified, policy actions are decided upon and the relevant Federal agencies are tasked with implementing those policy actions. Examples of policy actions taken in response to NSABB recommendations include the development of screening guidance for providers of synthetic double-stranded DNA; clarification of language in the Select Agent Rules regarding their applicability to synthetic genomics; a legal interpretation of the applicability of 18 USC 175c to research involving orthopoxviruses; revision of the *NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant or Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecules* to more explicitly address synthetic nucleic acids; and convening a panel of the National Academies to address scientific milestones needed before a predictive oversight system could be contemplated for select agents and toxins. Federal policies and guidance for the evaluation and oversight of dual use research of concern, as well as research anticipated to involve enhanced potential pandemic pathogens, were also informed by NSABB findings and recommendations.

[Back to Top](#)

[Load More](#)